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FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

MONTANA ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AMENDMENTS

OF 1968

PUBLIC LAW 90-576

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The Montana Advisory Council for Vocational Education was created following the passage of Public Law 90-576, The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968.

The Council is composed of 15 persons, appointed by the Governor from diverse backgrounds in labor, management and education. It is charged by law to advise the United States Commissioner of Education and the National Advisory Council concerning the operation of vocational education programs in Montana and to submit an annual evaluation report to the Commissioner through the Montana State Board of Education.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

MONTANA ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

This is the first annual report of the Montana Advisory Council for Vocational Education. The report is submitted with the recommendations of the Council dealing with the federal, state and local operation of vocational education with most emphasis on the state role in the operation of vocational education.

We submit this report with the hope that it will assist the State Board and the U.S. Commissioner of Education in fulfilling their roles of administration and leadership for vocational education in Montana and the nation.

A great deal of progress has been made in vocational education in Montana during the past year. We are anxious to assist in continuing and expanding this progress to meet the needs of employment opportunities and the needs of each individual wishing to receive the education available through quality vocational education.

FOREWORD

The purpose of the study commissioned by the Montana Advisory Council was to make an objective study of the accomplishments in Vocational Education as measured against needs, program objectives and the spirit and intent of present legislation.

The scope of the study included:

- * A review of the present State Plan for Vocational Education and its appropriateness to the present and future vocational education needs in Montana.
- * An evaluation of the present plans, policies and procedures involving vocational education at the national, state, and local levels.
- * An evaluation of the manner in which existing program is meeting current needs.
- * Summary and recommendations for program development.



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FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE REVIEW AND
EVALUATION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MONTANA

The State of Montana has committed itself to developing and continuing a quality program of Vocational Education for the citizens of Montana which will meet the needs of the people in addition to meeting the manpower needs of Montana industry.¹ Due to many circumstances, some of which are beyond the control of the state, Montana is and has been late in the development of a state-wide vocational education program. Among the factors delaying this development are the sparsity of population, an inadequate tax base to properly fund the programs needed, lack of a diversified industrial pattern for potential employment opportunities, restrictions imposed by past legislation, and a reluctance upon the part of all to give vocational education its due consideration in the total educational program for Montana.

In spite of the factors limiting the development of vocational education within the State, the people as a whole, industry, labor, and above all the elected representatives of the people, are becoming more aware than ever before of the State's responsibility for vocational education. To assist the state, particularly the Governor, State Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction and also the National Advisory Council for Vocational Education, the Montana Advisory Council for Vocational Education has prepared this report. It is the intent of

¹The term "industry" as used in this report refers to all phases of industry including agriculture, manufacturing, business and services.

this report to reflect upon the strengths as well as upon the weaknesses of the vocational education program in Montana. It is the desire of the Advisory Council that the findings and subsequent recommendations will be given serious consideration by the State Board and the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction as the Executive Officer of Vocational Education in their continuous assessment and development of vocational education in Montana. It is the conviction of this council that adoption of these recommendations will permit the people of the State of Montana to more fully realize and benefit from the potential of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 and recent state legislation, including H. B. 481 of the 41st Montana Legislature.

A challenging concept of both the new federal and state legislation to which we give full endorsement is that persons of all ages in all communities of the state will have ready access to appropriate vocational education which is of high quality, realistic in nature, and suitable to the needs of both the individual and industry.

A. The State Plan

A State Plan for the administration, as provided for by the Vocational Education Amendment of 1968, has been developed by the State Board as a guide for public education agencies, institutions, contractual agencies, the State Board of Education, and the vocational education staff of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and other interested and concerned agencies and individuals. The present plan was approved by the State Board of Education on June 9, 1969, and by the U. S. Commissioner's Office

on September 12, 1969.

The Advisory Council is cognizant of the limitations and restrictions placed upon the state in writing this original plan under the guidelines of the Vocational Education Amendment of 1968². In the light of these circumstances, however, we feel that the Plan basically meets the needs of the people of Montana and of those agencies concerned with and responsible for vocational education in Montana. It is the judgment of the Council, however, that there are isolated areas of the Plan that need further study and consideration. A specific review of these areas follows.

1. In view of the increasing demand for and current shortage of vocational education teachers, the increased emphasis on vocational education programs, and new V.E.A. '68 funds, it is apparent many more vocational education teachers will be needed in the very near future. The central problem is that a large demand must be met for new teachers while the teaching requirements are changing for experienced and new teachers alike. To help alleviate these problems, it is necessary to improve the present teacher preparation methods and requirements.³

2. The Advisory Council recognizes that the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 has some parts which are limiting the potential of the sparsely populated, less industrial states such as Montana. Also, the implication of some of the legislation, specifically dealing with the handi-

²Limitations consisted, among other things, of delayed development of guidelines by the U. S. Office of Education for the state to use in plan development, small state staff, and lack of adequate data to use in development of the plan.

³Specific recommendations regarding all topics are listed in the Summary Section of this report.

capped and disadvantaged tends to defeat the overall intent and purpose of the V.E.A. '68 Amendments.⁴ It is the feeling of the Council that all possible efforts should be made to bring the handicapped and disadvantaged students into the mainstream of educational activity rather than isolate them from the other students.

3. The terminology of the V.E.A. of '68 and parts of the State Plan is of such nature that it tends to restrict the expansion of vocational education below the high school grade level:

"....funds appropriated and allotted to the state for the purposes of Part B of the act shall be used for vocational education programs, services and activities for persons in high school...."⁵

To develop long-range plans it is important to be able to plan a program from Kindergarten-Adult which will progressively provide for the needs of the population of the community. Changes in the elementary curriculum are particularly needed. The exploration of the world of work should begin early and be utilized as a part of the total educational process of a student.

Decisions must be made as to the purpose of the public educational system in Montana. Is the purpose of the educational system to be responsive to the individual human needs of the students and employment needs as well as to promote academic excellence, or is it to be to promote only academic

⁴ Second Report, National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. November 15, 1969. page 5.

⁵P.L. 90-576 and State Plan for Vocational Education, 1969.

excellence to the extent that individual worth and identity is completely lost by a major part of our student population?

The Council considers it important that each person exiting from school will have a salable skill. We recognize this will have a rather profound effect upon the curriculum of the lower grades as well as the traditional high school and post high school institutions.

4. The State Board of Education through the vocational education staff of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has developed, though voluminous, a readable State Plan. An interesting part of the Plan is Appendix IV - Forms. Review of these forms indicates they are realistic and adequate with one exception. This exception is the exclusion of any information provided by the local education agency relative to the need of the particular program in the community. It is important that that program be determined upon sound data such as employment trends and opportunities for the particular training field. Too long we have been guilty of providing educational opportunities because of past experience or because it is what everyone else is doing. Such questions as: "Is this program meeting the needs of today's youth? Is there in fact a need for the program? Should this program be revised or replaced by a more relevant program?"

B. An Evaluation of the Present Plans, Policies and Procedures

1. The State Board of Education has the sole authority and responsibility to administer and supervise the public vocational education program in Montana. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction has been duly authorized by the State Board to represent the Board in all matters pertaining thereto.⁶

⁶State Plan for Vocational Education, 1969, page iii.

As such, the State Board has the responsibility and authority to make "policy" regarding vocational education. A review of the minutes of the State Board reveals they have taken action when necessary with "policy statements" and position papers. With the exception of Appendix V of the State Plan, there is nothing in print for public distribution setting down specifically the policies and procedures of vocational education in Montana.

The absence of board policy statements causes concern as to the role of the supervisory staff and their activities and the official capacity of their decisions and operation. Improved operation of the vocational education staff and clearer understanding by all concerned would be the results of clearly established and readily accessible policy statements from the proper policy making agency, in this case the State Board of Education. The present policy statements found in Appendix V of the State Plan are mainly dealing with financial matters and seem to be policy established by the State Superintendent for the internal operation of their office.

To coincide with the policy making responsibility of the State Board it is necessary that the Board and the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction have information available to them which would help them to set directions and evaluate results of the specific objectives the Board had established. Such information will also be useful in considering the validity of present policy. Without feedback from operations to top management it will be impossible to learn from its own experiences.

The type of management information necessary will of necessity have to be qualitative rather than quantitative or descriptive. As an example, it is not nearly so important to know how many dollars were spent on vocational education as it is to know how many of those dollars were spent in accordance with a specific policy established by the State Board. Proper long

as well as short range planning is virtually impossible without this kind of information.

Management oriented information will also be valuable for communicating with the general public. Because administrators cannot answer the kinds of questions asked by the public, vocational education is often unduly criticized. Such questions are: Does vocational education help reduce dropout rates? Are we training for today's job or tomorrow's jobs?

The state staff for vocational education is under the administration of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Executive Officer (to the State Board) of Vocational Education. The Component of vocational education is under the direction of the Director, Development of Vocational and Occupational Skills. The present staff now consists of sixteen full time professionals as compared to only seven less than a year ago. At least four positions are yet to be filled to provide a professional staff of twenty with several services being made available in the areas of fiscal management and research and development.

With a complete component it is felt the state office will be in a much stronger position to fulfill the needs of the local clientele and will be able to fulfill the many specific requirements of the V.E.A. of '68. The greatest lack, in the opinion of the local educators, has been the inability of the state office to provide services to the local school personnel as they felt they should.⁷ Although there will always be a greater demand for services than one can supply, it seems reasonable to expect many more services being made available to vocational education at the local level.

⁷ Evaluation of Montana Vocational Education. Dr. Earl Helper, 1970, page 13.

C. An Evaluation of the Manner in Which Existing Program is Meeting Current Needs

Montana has embarked upon a rather ambitious program to make vocational education available to all citizens of the state and has just completed its first year of operation under the new state legislation for vocational education and the first full year under Public Law 90-576 passed by Congress late in 1968. Montana educators have been quick to respond to the new developments in an effort to develop and expand the vocational education programs. Because of sparsity of population and distances involved, many problems arise in the development of programs which are not typical of problems throughout the country.

Many school districts are attempting to offer vocational education programs for students, in spite of the small number of students involved, thus resulting in extremely high per pupil cost. New alternatives of the V.E.A. '68 could be of valuable assistance to such programs. In particular Part G Cooperative Vocational Education, and Part H Work Study in the V.E.A. '68 offer alternatives which would improve the quality of vocational education and help make it possible to expand offerings even in isolated communities.

New programs have been started in agriculture, trades, industry, distributive education, technical education, health services and home economics. In these same areas programs in many instances have been expanded.

The state has greatly expanded its outreach in post high school vocational education by establishing a system which presently consists of five

post secondary vocational-technical centers. This is the first year of operation under that concept and it is yet early to adequately evaluate the concept. However, preliminary indications are that several hundred additional students are pursuing many more educational offerings in the five centers than in prior years without the center system.

In the effort to expand vocational education under the V.E.A. '68 and new state legislation, there appears to be a gap in the strategic approach to meeting the commitments of the state to vocational education support. The office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, however, has just recently issued a set of goals and objectives which include the following:

1. Development of a plan of operation for vocational education at the secondary and post secondary levels.
2. Development of standards for accreditation of post secondary vocational-technical centers.
3. Development of criteria for establishing vocational education programs.
4. Establishment of means to evaluate programs.

The development of these goals and keeping them updated will greatly assist in closing the strategic gap mentioned above.

A significant deficiency yet exists, however, and should be given high priority on the State Board's list of obligations. This is the lack of identification of handicapped and disadvantaged students and providing for their special needs in the vocational education program.

There is a serious problem in accurately and adequately managing vocational education because of the lack of meaningful and recent data. Accurate enrollment is not enough data. Longitudinal studies of students must be made. We must know not only how many enrolled but how many completed training with a salable skill, were they employed in the general field of training, did they remain employed, and many other such questions. This can and should be done at the local and state level. The State Superintendent's office is presently implementing such a study for part of the vocational education students. It is necessary, however, that this be expanded to include all vocational education and coordinated with other follow-up efforts to provide the necessary information.

The effectiveness of the vocational programs is also adversely influenced by three factors which are a responsibility of the federal government. An improvement in these three areas would be an asset to all planners of vocational education.

1. The timing of Congress in passing appropriations and the Bureau of the Budget in releasing these monies is sometimes almost a full year after the programs have been implemented. To expect an administrator, state or local, to plan effectively with this kind of support is unrealistic and detrimental to the attitude toward vocational education.

2. Another conflict that results in a program operating at less than maximum efficiency is the late release of federal regulations to the states for implementation of federally supported programs. A case in point is the guideline received from the U. S. Office of Education on June 23, 1970, to be used in the preparation of this report which had been contracted

out and nearly completed by that date. Consequently the report does not closely follow the recommended guideline.

3. The third problem is one that is not stated in the act nor does it command unanimous agreement among vocational educators throughout the country. The general tone of the V.E.A. '68 while very good and far reaching has a tendency to overlook the specific problems of rural and sparsely populated states in some instances.

In addition to the vocational education programs being developed by the State Board of Education, many other agencies are providing vocational education. These agencies include the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Manpower Development and Training conducted cooperatively between the office of the State Superintendent and the Montana Employment Service, Job Corps, Welfare, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Economic Opportunity, labor unions and private schools, among many others. The efforts of these agencies are to be commended, but it is clear that a more cooperative effort should be exerted to take advantage of all the opportunities available through these various sources and to avoid the unnecessary duplication that so often occurs due to lack of communication. This is an expensive and needless expenditure of public funds.

The Advisory Council submits this annual report as a beginning in our role of an advisory body for vocational education. We plan to report information at different intervals during the year as opportunity and need arise.

SUMMARY AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The thesis of this report is that vocational education in Montana, as well as in the nation, has made some significant strides toward closing the gap between man and his work. We are aware of the several imaginative and promising activities going on in the state which will prove highly beneficial to the occupational readiness of the vocational education student, no matter what his age or aspiration.

It has traditionally been that education as a whole has been reluctant to make major changes. Yet piecemeal change proceeds slowly and often is limited to isolated parts of the system. Indications are now very strong that the traditional structure of the education system is no longer appropriate to meet the changing needs of students, industry and society. It is also apparent that pressures from outside the school system, such as a drastically changing technology and economy, social revolt, and skyrocketing costs of education, are placing schools at the brink of disaster.

The passage of House Bill 481 and the V.E.A. of '68 have opened up new avenues and broadened others for Montana to pursue in providing quality and quantity vocational education. In the light of these factors and those listed in the body of this report, the Montana Advisory Council recommends the following action to be taken by the responsible agencies and their staffs to strengthen vocational education in Montana:

Recommendation #1

Local inservice training should be stressed by the State Board of Education through its proper supervisory channels (State Superintendent of Public Instruction, University Units offering vocational teacher education). Credentialing or certification of vocational teachers should be studied carefully by a working conference established by the State Board representing teachers, colleges preparing vocational teachers, Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, industry and the Advisory Council for Vocational Education. This study should be documented and reported directly to the State Board for consideration and implementation.

Recommendation #2

The Board of Education should direct the Executive Officer of Vocational Education to develop strong guidelines providing for vocational education to the disadvantaged and handicapped. These guidelines should include specific information relative to keeping the student in the regular class and providing him special services in that setting rather than isolating him in a special class. The Board, in contracting with any agency for construction of facilities for vocational education, should require observance of the state building code regarding the elimination of any architectural barriers to the handicapped. We further recommend that a program of recruitment and training of teachers for the disadvantaged begin immediately. Also, Congress should be notified that the language of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968, earmarking funds for the disadvantaged, be amended

to eliminate the implication that programs for the disadvantaged should be separate programs.

Recommendation #3

To plan adequately on a long range basis for all citizens, it is necessary that more clarity be provided in the language of the V.E.A. '68 regarding occupational education below the high school level. It is recommended that Congress be notified that language in the present law and the rules and regulations for implementation of that law should be clarified as to the intent of Congress for the use of V.E.A. '68 funds for vocational education below the high school level other than under Part D Exemplary Programs and Projects.

Recommendation #4

A vitally important factor in the operation of local vocational education programs which are adequate and meet the needs of people and industry alike is a strong, well-documented local plan for vocational education. We recommend that the requirement of such a local plan be implemented immediately by the State Board through the vocational education staff of the Executive Officer of Vocational Education and a guideline be prepared to direct the local education agency in the development of such a plan. Included in the plan should be such requirements as local advisory committees that are actively engaged in developing the plan, justification criteria for present program and step by step procedure for justification and implementation of new program.

Recommendation #5

Considering the vital necessity of complete, clear and readily accessible policy statements regarding vocational education for Montana, the State Board should direct the Executive Officer of Vocational Education to collect all past policy statements for at least the last ten years. Upon completion of this task a thorough review of these statements should be made by the State Board and the Executive Officer of Vocational Education (State Superintendent of Public Instruction).

With this review and a consideration of the new policy needs of vocational education a clear, concise and accessible statement of policy for vocational education should be adopted by the Board. The Advisory Council has committed itself to assist the State Board in this task in any manner the Board should desire and within the realm of capability of the Council.

Recommendation #6

To have management information at the state office level to assist in proper management of vocational education, it is necessary to have accurate and meaningful data. The Council recommends that the Superintendent of Public Instruction be directed by the State Board to continue the development of the present data gathering system the Office has recently inaugurated and that the system be expanded to cover all phases of vocational education.

Recommendation #7

The Council recommends that the National Advisory Council continue its efforts to inform the Congress of the United States of the specific needs

in legislation for vocational education. Specifically, we urge they advise the Congress regarding the three problems listed below:

a. The timing of availability of funds from the federal level to support vocational education makes it unrealistic and virtually impossible to plan adequately for vocational education as specified in P.L. 90-576. Funding prior to operation of programs would allow for much greater efficiency in planning and operation.

b. We recognize the tremendous responsibility of the U. S. Office of Education in fulfilling their tasks relating to vocational education, but we recommend that action be taken to expedite the distribution to the states of rules, regulations and guidelines which are required for the development of the total state vocational education program.

c. Montana is a large geographic state and small in population. This combination creates a scattered population that causes problems which are significant. We recommend that the U. S. Office of Education be advised to continue to develop program alternatives for such areas and that the funding procedures as outlined in P. L. 90-576 be reviewed and adjusted, taking into consideration the additional costs to a State in dealing with a potential vocational education population which is widely scattered.

Recommendation #8

Montana has a number of agencies involved in providing vocational education. In the provisions of P.L. 90-576 it is well established that efforts of the several agencies be cooperatively coordinated to provide the best and greatest amount of vocational education opportunities possible for

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Montana citizens. Cooperative efforts among many of the agencies has been commendable; however, we urge that the State Board continue to emphasize the importance of this effort, and that it direct the Executive Officer for Vocational Education to expand the cooperative efforts of the vocational education staff and their related agencies in an effort to avoid unnecessary expenditure and yet meet the needs of Montana.

Recommendation #9

Vocational Education in Montana is not as widely recognized as other types of education. This occurs because of several factors, but one important reason is the lack of acquaintance by the general public and industry with Montana Vocational Education. To improve this image the Council recommends that the State Board expand, through the avenues available to it in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and other related agencies, the advertisement and explanation of Montana Vocational Education. Again, the Council plans to provide cooperatively any assistance it can in this important endeavor to lend dignity and support to vocational education.

